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## From the Editor

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## From the Editor –

In this issue of *ACSQ* we are pleased to present a newly discovered insider's account of the Cochranites written by a female follower of the sect. Additionally, we publish here for the first time a previously unknown memoir by early Shaker collectors Robert and Hazel Belfit.

Earlier this year Maine-based antiquarian booksellers Scott De Wolfe and Frank Wood, of the firm De Wolfe and Wood, were delighted to discover Olive Junkins's *Dealings of a Few ...*, her account of the evolution of the Cochranite faith following the imprisonment of founder Jacob Cochrane. The pamphlet survives in only one other copy, at the Old York Historical Society, and was unknown to scholars. Hamilton College has acquired it, and we present Junkins's full text within. It is skillfully introduced, and annotated, by Shaker scholar, and dealer in Shaker literature, David Newell, who has studied the Cochranites for many years.

Our second piece is another new discovery: a memoir written by Watertown, Connecticut, Shaker collector Robert Belfit. Belfit and his wife Hazel befriended Shakers at many communities beginning in the 1920s. They amassed an outstanding collection of Shaker objects, and even seem to have started the Andrews collecting Shaker! Mr. Belfit clearly intended to publish this memoir, but as far as we have discovered his project was never realized. We are grateful to the Belfit's granddaughters, Lynn Crabtree and Patricia Williams, for granting permission to publish this memoir, and also for supplying their own reminiscences of their grandparents, letters written by the Shakers to the Belfits, and photographs taken by the Belfits of the Shakers. This small trove of materials provides wonderful insight into the condition of the Shakers and their villages in the mid-twentieth century, as well as the burgeoning field of Shaker collecting.

Finally, we offer another *interesting* new acquisition to the Communal Societies Collection. There seems to be no end to this type of stuff! (Thank God.)

– Christian Goodwillie, Associate Editor